

CHAP Application
Arch Social Club Marquee Reconstruction

Item 1

The Arch Social Club, founded in 1905 on Arch St., Baltimore, MD, is one of the oldest African American social clubs in the nation. Its purpose was to promote “charity, friendship and brotherly love”, among its members, which has been expanded since the 2015 Uprising to extend to the entire surrounding community to become a center for African American culture and heritage for Baltimore, as well as hosting events to instill pride in young people in the neighborhood.¹ Following the 1968 the Club purchased the former Schanze Theater building at 2426 Pennsylvania Ave. Built in 1912, and designed by local architect Paul Emmart, the building epitomizes the early twentieth century movie theater, with a decorative electrically lighted facade, and two floors featuring a dance hall with stage on the upper level and raked theater on the ground level.

Over the past century, the building has been modified a number of times including the installation of a movie marquee in early 1942² and flattening of the raked floor in the late 1950s or early 1960s to accommodate Wilson’s Restaurant (Figs 1 & 2). In 2013, the Club received funds from the state to restore the exterior of the building, removing the wood covering and restoring the main entry. (Figs 2 & 3). This work was approved by CHAP. In the same year the Club received additional funds to develop a historic structures report with cost estimate to fully restore the building, upgrade all MEP systems, become ADA compliant, and create a full kitchen capable of handling dinner for up to 400 people at one seating.

As a first step in the restoration of the Club, and to raise the profile of the Club and its new focus as a hub for African American arts and culture for Baltimore’s African American community, it was decided to pursue funding to reconstructed an historical compatible marquee configured to match the marquee removed prior to the Club’s acquisition of the building. The Club was successful in obtaining the majority of this funding from the National Trust’s African American Heritage grant last year, with the balance coming from other sources. (For Specifications see Architectural Drawings). In addition to the marquee, the club will illuminate the 2018 mural on the north facade of the building, a celebration of African American performers (Billie Holiday) and writers (Ta-Nehisi Coates) among others. (Fig 4)

Items 4 & 6

The marquee is made of bronze pressed metal on structural metal frame with LED screens and low voltage lights on three sides, two speakers and medium voltage lights in the ceiling. (For Further information see Architectural, Electrical, and Structural drawings and specifications.)

For existing conditions and context see Figs 3, 5 & 6. For historic photographs see Figs 1 & 2.

¹ In 2015 the Club developed a non-profit arm to fund social events to assist in developing community pride and creating events for young people in the surrounding community.

² Email from Amy Davis to Richard Wagner, Feb 2019.

Applicant submitted photos for Cover Letter



Fig 1: Arch Social Club circa 1950



Courtesy of the Theatre Historical Society of America

Figure 2: Façade covered with T1-11 plywood siding in September 1977.

(Credit: Theatre Historical Society of America, Catalog # NC 0665).



Fig 3: Front façade after 2013 restoration



Mural North Elevation 2426 Pennsylvania Ave., Baltimore



Fig 5: Looking NW, 2013



Fig 6: looking SW, 2013